

To Social Leaders Concerned

Dear Sir/Madam,

25/1/02

On receiving the email of the Director of Transport Bureau, I am not satisfied at all with the explanation given by MTR. I am particularly surprised at the stubbornness and harshness of MTR on students age above 25.

I myself, as well as some of my U-mates who are over 25 years of age, are poor students who have to rely on Government loans and grants. We are studying the Bachelor degree. We are over 25 because we enter University late. Before we enter University, we were engaged in low income jobs or part-time jobs. What we earned had already gone. We enter University with similar financial strength as those beloved under 25s. We study together, we discuss projects together, we play together. I do not think we are different from the under 25s except our age number. I do not understand why some people in society always think of us as a very special group of students that should be treated differently from others. We are as youthful as the under 25s, but again, some people always tend to bar us from the under 25s, so that we cannot enjoy various activities primarily designed for youths and students. These make us very frustrated. We *are* students but are not treated as students. We *are* youths but are barred from youths' privileges. To our anger and dismay, some people even laugh and feel happy when they hear our complain. What wrong have we done to society?

Talking about MTR, one of my U-mates chooses to take the non air-conditioned buses even in summer because he cannot afford MTR without concessionary fares. I think the Government student travel subsidy does not include school holidays and extra curricular activities. Please note that Universities' summer holidays last 3 to 4 months. This means we will have to pay full fare in this long period, while the under 25s can enjoy student fares without any restrictions. So it is natural for us to think MTR is harsh to us, and is practicing age discrimination, and sensationally in favor of the under 25s.

We think top officials of MTR and Government, as well as some social leaders, do not have a genuine and true picture of what students over 25 are like, we think there is a misunderstanding and a generation gap between us. They only care for teenagers. Nevertheless, we will fight on, even after we graduate from University. (A group of young students)

Address: Flat 17D, block 14. Chi Fu Fa Yuen, Pokfulam, HK

Dear Members,

2/5/02

While we appreciate the Government giving students over 25 travel allowances, we think this scheme has shortcomings, and is not as welcomed as the MTR student travel card:

- Only poor students will apply for the allowance, this is only a minority of students over 25, while the MTR student travel card can be applied by all students under 25.
- Students living near the University/school will not be given any allowance, or very little. MTR student travel card does not count on the distance between the student's home and the University/school.
- We prefer the Government give money to MTR which is intended for the student travel allowance, and MTR issues student travel cards to us students over 25.
- We think it is ideology rather than money which prevents MTR from issuing student travel cards to us students over 25, because MTR thinks we are "too old" to enjoy such privileges, which MTR primarily intended for younger students / secondary school students/teenage students. Ideology is like political beliefs, religious beliefs, and is extremely difficult to change. It is rather a psychological issue, which has its roots from our ancestors, who thought it is "obvious correct" to be generous to the younger and harsher to the older, without thinking and considering the actual situation. This is what we meant by "sensationally in favor of younger students". MTR has been occasionally sponsoring activities and programs designed for youths under 25. Why don't they use the money to benefit students over 25 by issuing student travel cards to such students?
- Possessing the MTR student travel card (with the student's photo on the card) makes the student feel more like a student, that is, the status of student is solidified. If the student loses his/her school's student ID card, the MTR card can be used as a reserve. Again, it seems to us MTR is not recognizing students over 25 as students, MTR requires "students" to be linked with youthness, which we think is unnecessary, and is unfair to older students.
- We think the Government Student Travel Allowance Scheme cannot match MTR's student travel card. For example, the Scheme gives a student \$M for extra-curricular activities and holidays traveling, but

the actual amount of money used by the student is 2\$M, 3\$M, or even 4\$M. But, the MTR student travel card does not have any restriction on the traveling habit of the student. Students often travel much more than what the Government expects or is willing to sponsor, especially during the summer holidays and long holidays.

- We agree with Ms Rosanna Wong Yick-ming that society should encourage more young people (we do not accept the definition of ‘young’ as under 25) to study. The first thing society must do is to eliminate all bias and discriminations against older students (eg those over 25). Society must not draw a line between over 25s and under 25s, calling the former as “over-aged students” and the latter as “formal student”. There is nothing as “over-aged students”!!

A Group of Young Students

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